



STORM RIDER **NEWS**

1 Septmeber 2003
Sustainer Army Airfield

Greetings from the front. This past month has been busy for the battalion. We flew 955 combat hours in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom which relates to approximately 38 hours per aircraft per month. In Gieblestadt, we average about 20 hours per airframe. As you know, to meet such an OPTEMPO requires hard work and tremendous dedication. Your loved ones continue to rise to this challenge on a daily basis. Moreover, it takes a team effort to keep aircraft flying and succeed in this harsh environment. This effort occurs across the battalion spectrum from flight line maintenance to refueling to ground vehicle maintenance to logistics to tactical operations and probably many other areas that I don't see on a normal basis.



The flight line at Sustainer Army Airfield

Last safety day, we enjoyed the fruits of your labor by having company pool barbeques courtesy of the money collected at the Gieblestadt picnic. I thank you for your efforts and hope that you will continue in the same vain throughout this deployment. In regards to R&R leave, rumor on the street is that it will happen soon. I don't subscribe to rumors but I do believe that R&R will happen and when it does the soldiers of this battalion will be on the first available transport. However, only a small percentage, possibly less than 10% will be allowed to leave so that we are able to fully meet all of our mission requirements. This may mean that some soldiers will not be able to go on R&R leave before our redeployment in March when III Corps takes over. Fortunately, some of you have

already had the goodness of having your loved ones return on leave. The Brigade Commander assumed great risk to make this happen to take care of soldiers and their families but circumstances beyond his control curtailed the follow-on groups.

As far as return time for PCS/ETS, the battalion's policy is 90 days for ETS and 45 days for PCS. However, I will look at each PCS individually to determine if the soldiers warrants more time based on his new unit's deployment timeline. I will do everything possible to ensure that our soldiers are cared for and given as much family time as possible before heading out to a new assignment that could bring them straight back over to Iraq or any other hot spot.

We continue to improve our living conditions. The battalion is living better than most units in theater. Unfortunately, one area the Brigade can not influence is telephone coverage. MCI reaches Baghdad but there is no coverage as of yet in this area which is approximately 40 miles to the north. We will continue to press this issue and upgrade our internet system whenever possible to provide the best communication for our battalion soldiers. I ask for your patience and understanding.

Again, I remind you that we are at war and that the men and women of this great battalion are making a difference towards Iraq's stability. Their efforts are enabling key personnel to solidify Iraq's government and take away the global reach of our enemies. I appreciate your support and sympathize with the many difficulties you may be encountering at home. Continue to support them in anyway you can and trust that their well-being is my number one concern.

STORM RIDERS!

ROBERT W. WERTHMAN
LTC, AV
Commanding

Nighthawks!!

As I think many of you have heard ... well, read ... from our previous Newsletters from the war



front, Quality of Life is our life. And since it takes up so much of the non-work related time, I thought we should give you a little taste of what we have ... to show you we aren't totally "roughing it".



Quality of Life (or QOL) starts with a mindset. There is no one thing that defines a good QOL. Mainly, it's all the little things each of us do to make life here that much more manageable. The first and probably largest facet is in the realm of personal living space. It's a hard choice here, with desert temperatures reaching in excess of 120 degrees, to find that line between comfort and privacy. But I think we've managed to do



both. The Battalion, with great help from the S4 section (CPT Stayner, SFC Herra, SFC Williams, SGT Fanning, SPC Gonzalez and SPC Garza), worked their magic to get us large "Ishtar" style fest tents, complete with air conditioning. So that helped with the comfort, but we still had work to do with the privacy. So with suggestions and ideas from throughout the company, we tackled the problem and came up with our new partitions. Comfort and privacy, all in one.



Our next big hurdle after we provided that little bit of comfort, was in the realm of camaraderie. It's tough, having to work and live with the same individuals for an extended period of time. I'm sure you hear words to that affect from your loved ones all the time. In the rear, we have you to turn to at night ... To get away from work for a little while and relax. Here, we are not so lucky. So having a unit where you can enjoy the company of your comrades is a goal to strive for. The most important thing to know is that ... it can't be done all the time, and sometimes we all need a break and need to relax. So how do you do that ...?



We hoped that we had found a few solutions to that problem with our pools. I know, sounds like

a little thing, even a ridiculously juvenile thing sometimes ... but oh were we wrong. The pools have been a point of discussion with every unit on this post ... mainly being “where did you get that, and how can I get one!” So we feel privileged to be one of the few that can jump in when the temps are 110-120, cool off for a little while, relax, and maybe even work on our tan ☺



Now as the pools are large, visible icons to our goal for a better QOL, sometimes, to include right now, the information age rears its head and we are reminded of the power of computers. As many, if not all of us, have either grown up in or had to adapt to the information age, the simple things in life like the internet seem like a right, and not a privilege. But all it takes is a deployment like this to teach us differently. With the contribution of S6 section (1LT Brooks, SFC Thompson, SGT Jackson, SPC McAbee, SPC Daly, SPC Chadwick and PFC Longe) and with the companies input, we have developed one of the only “Internet Cafes” within the



Brigade, and in all actuality, on the installation. We have taken minimal resources, and developed a product to allow us to talk to you.

With all the things that we brought with us, there is always still more that we desire. A lot of that we get from you, in care packages. But as the mail seems to work its way here, on whatever schedule it’s on, sometimes those necessities arrive before the packages. To help curb that, we have developed our own AAFES shopette, within the battalion area, to help with those little items we need. Being manned, or shall I say “womaned” in some instances, by the Battalion Food service section (SFC Fentress-Bussey, SPC Gladney, and SPC Anderson with the assistance of PFC Edwards from the Ministry team), our soldiers have almost immediate access, with no lines or waiting, to things we all love ... and I’ll admit it ... it’s mostly junk food. ☺



So as you can see, while not the hardest or most important thing in our lives (which I’m sure many would say staying healthy and alive so we can return to you would rank above all others), we try to do everything we can to make this year go by quicker and more productively. We stive everyday, as we know it’s a day closer to you.

Nighthawks!!

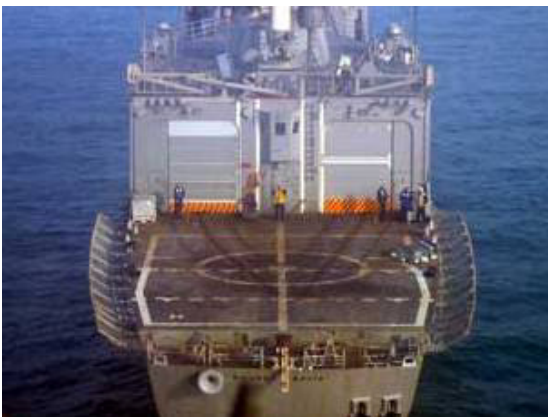
CPT James Edwards

Blue Stars!

BLUESTARS had the opportunity to practice some deck landing qualifications with the Navy out in the Gulf. Catch any fish guys?



Bluestars conduct DLQs in the Gulf



Sgt Butler during the dunker-heeds recertification class was quoted as saying “Not without my rubber ducky I’m not”



We caught these guys trying to draw straws. They were deciding who should go to work today because it was going to be over 50C. Good Luck



War Eagles!

Greetings from Sustainer Army Airfield. I hope everything is going well in the rear. The days go slow here but the weeks seem to pass by quickly. We are keeping busy and flying all the time. To help you understand a little about our days out here I would like to describe to you a typical day.

The daily grind often reminds us of Groundhog Day. We usually fly about six aircraft a day. Four of those are normally early morning missions that call for a @0430 wake up and 5-8 hours of actual flight time. Additionally, we try to fly two aircraft at night for training our newer aviators and crew chiefs. The remainder of the company is often busy doing maintenance on the aircraft that are not flying or various details that

include, but are not limited to; guarding local nationals who are working on post, perimeter guard, PX support and so on.



War Eagle Fest Tents

We have recently moved into two large white fest tents. They are an improvement from living in the hanger.

They are well air conditioned, but in mid day, they have a hard time beating the 130F heat. At night however, it is down right cold in the tents. We still have the pool. It is a chore to keep it clean with all the dust. Normally it needs to be cleaned about once a week (draining it). With as busy as we are from day to day, not too many people use it.

The company command post is now in a company built plywood building. CW2 Joseph O'Rourke, single handedly produced all of the wood, lights and plans for the building. CW2 Jason Duffany and SGT Lapolt led a team of War Eagles in building the structure from ground up as well as all of the wiring. With the help of some army engineers from Ft. Lewis, Washington, an A frame roof was just added. We finally got some air conditioners for it and it may soon have usable office space.



The best break from it all is getting off the airfield and seeing the large country of Iraq. Our

missions take us to every corner of the country and into Kuwait. The majority of missions begin in Baghdad where we'll pick up VIPs and then take them out to visit various places. I'd love to go into detail on some of our operations, but operational security take precedence.

Unfortunately for the War Eagles, we are forced to bid farewell to the most senior warrant officer in our company, CW3 Nathan Wriston. Nate and his family have been a huge part of our War Eagle family for about a year and a half. He is a true leader and his soft spoken southern ways will be surely missed. Whether he is giving a check ride or watching the Andy Griffith Show, Nate's presence always keeps us straight. Nate will be leaving the War Eagles but not Germany. He will be moving up to UASSD, USAREUR Aviation Safety and Standardization Division, which is essentially the group that ensures that aviation standards are being met throughout Germany. I am sure he will remember the War Eagles fondly when he returns to give us our evaluations. We wish Nate, his wife Julie and four children, Jonathan, Gavin, Rebbekah Kate and Sarah Beth good luck in their new



A War Eagle Sunset at Sustainer Army Airfield assignment and thank them for being such a huge part of our War Eagle family. I know many of our soldiers will miss the care packages that Julie Wriston has sent over the last six months. Thank you.

Rebels!

Hello Families & Friends of D Company
Here at Sustainer Army Airfield, temperatures remain high along with the spirits of soldiers across the battalion. The experience for all of us in D Company has been an educational one as we get a little better at our jobs of fixing aircraft.



Blackhawks are rarely broke for long as soldiers combine their expertise and efforts to return aircraft to a flyable condition to support essential missions in rebuilding the country of Iraq. Most are only down for a day before quick minds troubleshoot and repair bad components or perform essential inspections in extreme heat. I cannot be more proud of the work being done here!



We have been working long hard days, but manage to take the time to relax as often as missions will allow. Just recently, we held a barbeque to say farewell to 1SG Perkins. We gathered as much food as we could to enjoy the day to pay tribute to a man that has done an outstanding job in one of the hardest positions an NCO can be given. We ate, played some volleyball and cooled off in our well used pool. He goes on to attend the Sergeants Major Academy in Ft Bliss, Texas. He will be sorely missed; however, MSG Ross from HHC, 12th BDE will be his replacement as we perform the Change of Responsibility 1 September 2003. I expect he will maintain the same level of success that the company has enjoyed from 1SG Perkins.



I'd like to congratulate SSG Sut Zack and SGT Ferreira for re-enlisting recently. They both re-committed themselves to the Army and were rewarded nicely with time away in Qatar for a few days rest and relaxation. All soldiers who can score higher than a 290 on their PT test, re-enlist or show exceptional performance are put on an order of merit list for the two positions allocated to the Battalion.



Though soldiers are here working dutifully in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom, I realize the difficult sacrifices made by all of you in the rear and stateside. I salute you all for your courage through this separation from your loved ones. It takes a great deal of dedication to support a loved one through a deployment such as this and maintain a family, household, and relationship. Stay strong and know I am doing my best to support all them here. MSG Blackledge is now back in Giebelstadt to help maintain rear detachment operations. You can refer to him if anything to understand what the soldiers here are

enduring and accomplishing in a this harsh
desert environment. REBELS!!!!

RAYMOND J. HERRERA
CPT, AV
Commanding

